

HOW MASONIC EDUCATION ADMITS ONE TO THE GLORY AND GREATNESS OF MASONRY

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The following address was delivered before a great company of Masons in Chicago, on the evening of March 21, 1917, at a reception accorded the speaker just before he sailed to begin his ministry at the City Temple, in London, Grand Master Wheeler presiding. The Editor of THE BUILDER has unearthed it from somewhere and asks me to allow him to publish it. If I hesitate, it is for two reasons: it reads like ancient history today, and it has too much of the personal element in it. Yet perhaps my experience of losing interest in Masonry, and then regaining it, may be of value as a warning to lodges to give young men something more than the Ritual of the Order.

Since these words were uttered the Great War and the Little Peace have swept over us, leaving desolation and disillusionment in their wake. They have gone, those years, dark, dreadful, and confused; but the ideals of this address still glow and abide in the heart of the speaker, and he makes bold once more to commend them to his brethren. In a day when the brotherhood of the world is broken, our great and gentle Craft has an opportunity, the like of which it has never known before, to use its influence and power to spread that fraternal righteousness without which the future will be as dark as the past. - J.F.N.

WHEN I was a little child about seven years of age, I came to know several men who were wont to visit the home of my mother about once a month. She was a widow, and had a little family to look after, and we lived in the South in the midst of the poverty that followed in the wake of the Civil War. At first I did not know the purpose that these men had in mind in visiting our home. But one day I asked my mother, and she told me that they were members of the Masonic Order. They had just come to learn if there was any way in which they might help her in her struggle to keep her family together. Happily, aid was not needed, but every month, and sometimes more than once a month, those men would come with a quiet and kindly knock to see if we wanted anything.

As I grew older, I learned to know these men, and I learned also to know the story of my father who had been a member of their lodge - had, I believe, been a Master of it - and I learned something in connection with his Masonic experience that would perhaps interest you if I recite it very briefly. He was a soldier of the South, as some of you, or your fathers, were no doubt soldiers of the North in our Civil War. He wore the gray uniform, and you wore the blue. He was captured at one of the battles in the State of Arkansas, and as a young captain in the army of the South was brought up the Mississippi River to Rock Island, where he was detained as a prisoner of war for quite a while. The northern climate was very severe on southern men in prison. How severe, you may learn by looking into the archives of the War Department. My father fell ill, desperately ill. He made himself known as a Mason

to an officer of the prison at Rock Island. The officer took that young brother Mason out of the prison to his home, and nursed him back to life. When the War closed, and his freedom had again come, that officer, his brother Mason, put money into his hand, and a little pearl-handled pistol in his pocket, that he might find his way back home midst unsettled conditions following the war.

Such was the spirit of Masonry in our Civil War, and if the real story of its service in softening the horrors and terrors of war, in sweetening to some degree its bitterness, is ever told, it will be a volume that men will open with trembling hands, and close with weeping eyes. Indeed, at a time when churches were rent in twain, when states were torn asunder, the only tie that remained unbroken in the hour of the Civil War, was the tie of Masonic Fellowship.

Having this tradition of the beauty and service of Masonry in my own family, is it a wonder that when I grew to be a man I had a desire to be a Mason? And it so happened that the son of this soldier of the South was initiated into the Order of Freemasonry not very far from where his father had been a prisoner of war, under the Grand Jurisdiction of Illinois, in old Friendship Lodge No. 7. Now, that was a night that I can never forget. While I was in college I suffered from a lightness of purse that was so painful that I did not belong to any fraternities. I had no time to waste, no money to spend on anything but bare necessities of life - and sometimes they were rather bare, so that I came into this Order to receive my first impression of a secret fraternity, and it was profound and lasting. Somehow, as I have further discovered the many beauties in Masonry, all of them benign and exalting, I still think that perhaps the most beautiful thing in all Masonry is its First Degree.

The other degrees followed. and at the close of the Third Degree there was a little banquet, as was the custom of that lodge, and the candidate of the evening was asked to express his impressions of Masonry. Well, they were so many, so vivid, and so deeply spiritual, that I found difficulty in putting into words what was in my mind. But I did manage to ask if there was any little book that would tell a young man entering the Order the things that he would most like to know about Masonry - what is it? whence it came, and what it is trying to do in the world ? No one present that evening knew of any such little book. So I began to ask questions of the Master of the lodge, as to what the meaning of the lodge was, of what it was a symbol, what was the meaning of the exercises in the preparation room, the knocks at the door, the movements about the lodge, and the different symbols that I became aware of when I entered the Light? I asked him why he did this, why he did that, and why he did the other? "Well," he said, "we do it because that is the way Masons have always done things." Which is only saying that we do it because we do it.

Not satisfied with such an answer, I asked, "Why ? What do you mean by it?" Alas, he could not tell me. I did not blame him then, and I do not blame him now; but I was full of innumerable questions, because I came into old Friendship Lodge fresh from Harvard University, and it seemed to me that a thing so impressive and so stately must have a long history, must have a deep meaning; and I wanted to know both. I had made some study of Egyptology, and I saw about me certain signs and symbols that brought echoes from a long past. And so, receiving no satisfaction from the Master of the lodge in answer to those questions, I ventured to ask a member of the Grand Lodge of Illinois. While he told me of the moral suggestions of the symbolism of the Order, and gave me very briefly and in vague outline the story of modern Masonry, from the founding of the Mother Grand Lodge of England down to our day; back of that he could not go; deeper than that he did not dig.

WHY I LOST INTEREST IN THE CRAFT

After a time, while I enjoyed the ceremonies of the various degrees, I lost some of my interest in the Order. Years later I went to live in Iowa, and I found there, as Grand Master at that time, a remarkable man, as big in body as he is in mind, who had appointed a committee to investigate the literature of the Order. if perchance he might discover such a little book as I had asked on the night on which I received the Third Degree in Masonry. He was looking for such a book in order that he might put it into the hands of all young men who were received into the fellowship of Masonry in Iowa. Unable to find just what he wanted, it fell to my lot, after fourteen years, to prepare the little book that I felt the need of years before; and that is the story of *The Builders*. If I have done nothing else, I hope I have made it a little easier for young men entering the Masonic Fraternity, and whose minds are filled with so many questions that lead into so many interesting fields of study, to find such a little book; and I hope my labor is not in vain.

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DR. NEWTON ASKS FOR MATERIALS CONCERNING ALBERT PIKE

"I am preparing a biography of Albert Pike. inasmuch as the Pike family has authorized me to undertake this work, and the proper Scottish Rite authorities have given me most cordial encouragement, I shall Cope in the course of time to prepare a volume that will be more or less authentic. May I ask you to co-operate with me? I should like f or you to make the request through your columns that your readers supply me with any literature, letters, diaries, books, or any other matter that may throw any light whatever on the career of our great and distinguished brother. I shall take pains to preserve any such material in good condition and return it promptly."

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One of the first things that impressed me when I entered old Friendship Lodge was the fact that it contained in its fellowship men of every political party; and, later, when looking into the history of the Order, and its principles, I learned that questions of politics that divided men and sometimes estranged and embittered them, were not permitted in a Masonic lodge. To me that was a very eloquent fact. Knowing something of the bitter partisan spirit in the history of American politics, it seemed to me a wonderful thing that there should be a great, kindly fellowship that eliminated such questions, and permitted men of all parties to meet as man to man in the simple, fundamental fellowship of humanity without regard to party.

As I looked further into the history and philosophy of the Order, I learned the deep reason why the ancient Masons prohibited political discussions in their lodge rooms, and it seems to me that time has only confirmed the wisdom of our fathers in that regard, as in so many other regards. Just now there is a tendency in some parts of the country, under one pretext or another, in one form or another, to bring political issues within the Masonic fellowship. It would be a great blunder; it would make our Masonry something different, something dangerously different from the Masonry of our fathers. It will cease to be an Order which unites men, and will become only a tiny atom in an indistinguishable blur of partisan feuds. So, brethren, let us use words in their right meanings, and not try to stretch or twist the

word "politics" so as to bring in under any kind of excuse the thing which our fathers so wisely excluded from our lodges.

Another thing that impressed me that night in old Friendship Lodge, was the presence of men of nearly all the religious persuasions represented in the community. There is a certain stage in the growth of a town – a certain gosling stage, as I sometimes describe it - when it is neither a town nor a city; when it is divided up into cliques and parties, and when sectarian rivalry is very acute. It was so in that community at that time, whatever may be its state of mind now. In that lodge room were gathered men who were supposed to be rivals on the outside of the room, and yet they met in a spirit of fraternity and good will. As I passed through the degrees, I found that the Order placed emphasis only upon those profound, fundamental things that underlie all religions, over-arch all creeds, and that upon that platform, these men, however they might differ in the details of dogma and ceremony, stood together man to man, brother to brother, in the spirit of fellowship.

MASONRY ASKS, "WHAT IS YOUR NEED?"

Later, when I studied the story of the Order, and particularly the founding of the Mother Grand Lodge of England, and looked at the background of sectarian bitterness, confusion and bickerings, which marked that time, and against that dark background saw the men who founded the Mother Grand Lodge, and the fundamental principles of religion which they enshrined into their constitution, it seemed to me that such an event was forever memorable and prophetic.

But I am letting the hounds get ahead of the hare. As I pondered over my initiation that night, it seemed to me that I had come into an Order which was prophetic of a time when men would discover outside the lodge, as they discovered inside, that the things that they have in common, the things upon which they do agree, are of so much greater importance that they will overshadow the things about which they have debated so long. It seemed to me that I stood at an altar which was prophetic of a time when the estranged religious units of the world would be brought closer together, and men would ask not, "What is your creed?" but, "What is your need?" And when they thus arrive, the scene will be presided over by the beautiful genius of Freemasonry, which has prophesied it for centuries.

Naturally, I wished to know something of the story of such an altar, and so I went back into the past as far as literature and records would take me. Perhaps you will let me tell you a few of the things that I discovered. I found that primitive society had three great institutions with which we are familiar, and one that we need to rediscover. First, it had the home, crude indeed, as all things were in the beginning of the world, yet that rude home had in it the prophecy of the home in which you were born, with its tenderness, its beauty, and its memories. It had the church, not then a church, nor a great temple, but only an altar of unhewn stone, its rites crude, its - smoke of incense ascending in a cloud of fear. Yet in the darkness of it all was a gleam of that light which and never was on land or sea. Third, there was the state or tribal form of government - very rude at first, very imperfect, but the basis and prophecy of this great republic in which we live.

But there was another institution, of which I had known nothing at all, and the very existence of which I had not guessed. It was called the "men's house." It stood at the center of every village, and was really the center of the life of primitive society. It was the secret house of initiation, in which every man of the

tribe, when he became of age, was initiated, trained, sworn, and then entrusted with the law, legend, history and religion of his people. Here is the origin of all secret orders, of whatever kind, and this is what our Masonic fathers meant when they said that Masonry is as old as the race. Certainly the idea, necessity and practice of initiation goes back to the beginning. For years I have followed the different ceremonies of initiation used in different primitive secret societies, and I have found that while they differed, each having a certain local color of its own, they had certain basic things in common; that the purpose was always the same, the spirit was always the same, and that nearly always the climax was the same. Nearly always there was a degree which represented, in a dramatic form, the death and the resurrection of the candidate.

Those early initiations were frightful, brethren. Men were exposed not only to physical dangers, but to spiritual terrors, in order to test their physical courage, their mental power, and their moral trustworthiness. When they were so proved, they were admitted into the secret order of primitive society, and given certain words and tokens and grins and signs whereby they could make themselves known everywhere; and I was much interested in discovering how universal are the signs and tokens which we use in our lodges. If you think about it, they are the natural gestures of greeting, of distress or of brotherliness, and because they are so natural they have been used the world over. For Masonry has as a part of its genius the wisdom to use what is old and wise and human.

Continuing my study, I have followed the history of this men's house of primitive society down the years until it became associated with the art of building, because of the importance of architecture. I traced the Order of Builders out of Egypt into Asia Minor, where they built the Temple of King Solomon; then westward into Rome and the College of Architects up to the time when the Roman Empire reeled to its ruin. Then they seem to have taken refuge on an island in Lake Como, and from there-I traced them to the great Order of the Cathedral Builders who uplifted those shrines of beauty and prayer which the great war has destroyed. After the cathedrals were built the Order began to decline. They were called Freemasons because they were permitted to go wherever their work called them; because they were free from taxation; because they enjoyed many legal privileges not granted to other bodies; because of their exceeding importance as master builders. Free, also - to distinguish them from guild Masons - because a guild Mason could not go outside the town in which he lived, whereas Freemasons could journey far and near.

THE ACCEPTED MASON ENTERS THE CRAFT

When the Order began to decline, men who were scholars and thinkers and students, but not architects, began to ask to be received in its membership; men like Ashmole, who founded the Museum at Oxford, England. They were accepted, and hence the name, "Free and Accepted" Masons. These men sought membership in the Order because they found in it a rich deposit of symbolism which was worth their study, and in some lodges the Accepted Masons were in the majority. Such was the feet in 1717 - a date which will be celebrated in every jurisdiction of the world - the founding of the Grand Lodge of England. That date, June 24, 1717, gave a new impetus and a new emphasis to Masonry, and it spread rapidly all over the world.

And so Masonry came to our shores, very early, long before our Republic was founded, before even the name "United States" was ever spoken. It was a great day when this kindly and friendly Order, with its

spirit of justice, liberty, tolerance, intellectual courtesy, brotherly love and spiritual refinement, put its foot upon our shores. To tell the story of the connection of Masonry with the history of this country, and particularly with the history of our Republic, would be to repeat a romance. It was not an accident that the Tea Party in Boston Bay was planned in a Masonic lodge and executed by the members of that lodge. It was not a mere coincidence that the first President of this Republic was also a Master Mason, and that so many of those who united in forming the organic law of this Republic were Master Masons. And, because the spirit of Masons had become a part of their thinking and living, they wrote it into the fundamental law of our land. So it has been all down our history.

This Republic has never had a better friend than the Ancient Order of Freemasonry, and it never will have. In every great hour of national trial in the past, our Order has stood true to our Republic, as it will stand true today in the crisis through which we are now passing - perhaps the greatest crisis in all our history - when the flag will need the love and loyalty of every true American. Masons from one end of the land to the other will insist that the flag shall protect every citizen, and that every citizen shall protect the flag.

Naturally my study of Masonry increased my zeal for promoting an interest in the study of it among my brethren; and hence my association with this movement in behalf of Masonic education. What is education? Let me put together two famous definitions, one by Huxley and the other by Milton, and they will tell us what it is.

Education is the training of the intellect in the law of nature, and the fashioning of the affections and of the will into an earnest loving desire to live in harmony with those laws, that a man may be fitted, justly, skillfully and magnanimously to perform every office, both private and public, of peace or of war.

If you would sum it up all in one word, it could not be better described than by the one word used by that mighty German genius - the greatest man Germany has known, except Luther - Goethe, when he used the word "Reverence." Reverence first, for that which is below us, for the tiny, teeming, swarming forms of life at our feet. Such reverence led a poet to say that he would not count among his friends a man who would needlessly put his foot upon a worm, or wantonly and cruelly take life from any living creature. Reverence, in the second place, for that which is on the level with ourselves, for the human, for all that wears the human shape, however deformed or sin-bespotted, or far fallen; the insight to see behind every face, however scarred or blackened, something noble and divine. And reverence, in the third place, for that which is above us, which out-tops our knowledge, and upon which we are every moment dependent. That one word, so expounded, might be used as a synonym for education - Reverence.

What do we mean by a profane? Why do we so describe a man who is not a Mason? What is the difference between this lodge room and the street? Answer that question, and it will describe the difference between a mind that is reverent and one that is irreverent. Anything and anybody can go through the street, a cow or a cat or a dog; but not so in our lodge room. Here certain thoughts and things are excluded. Just so, a man who is profane will allow any kind of thought, no matter how slimy, to go wiggling and squirming through his mind; but if he is a Mason in the true sense, his mind is a place of reverence, and there are some thoughts that will not be permitted to enter when they

knock, no matter how many knocks they give at the door. Some sentiments will be put out as cowans and eavesdroppers, and not be permitted to pollute the sancity of his mind and of his heart.

MAX MULLER'S PARABLE OF EDUCATION

Perhaps a description of education is better than a definition, and there is a story translated from the literature of the Ancient East by Max Muller which is a perfect parable of what I have in mind. The gods, so runs this story, having stolen from man his divinity, met to decide where they should hide it.

It was a long, solemn, secret council. One suggested that it be buried in the earth, but the caution was expressed that man might dig there and find that pearl of great price. Another suggested that it be taken and dropped into the depths of the sea, but the same fear was expressed that man, being a great wanderer, and having an insatiable curiosity, might go even to the depths of the sea to find the lost treasure. Finally the oldest and wisest of the gods said in a whisper, lest it be heard outside the council chamber, "Let us hide it in man himself, as that is the last place he will ever think to look for it." And it was so agreed. Man did dig into the earth, bringing up gold and silver and precious ore, and he did go over the sea and down under the sea, seeking high and low, and far and near, before he thought to look within himself to find the God whom he sought. Evermore the Lost Word is near us, even in our hearts, and happy is the man who finds it. It is more precious than all the gold in all the tempted hills.

Education, then, in the Masonic sense, as I understand it, is this discovery of whence we came, who we are, and where we are going. What is the first question that Masonry asks you at the door ? Is it not just this question ? She wishes to know whence you came, and what is your purpose here on earth. Without waiting to receive your answer, for you are not then truly qualified to give an answer, she admits you into her Temple, tells you whence you came and why you are here upon earth - the reason for your life, its excuse for being. She helps you towards that self-discovery which is the awakening of the soul, the beginning of its advance, morally, intellectually, and spiritually. Moreover, in the First Degree she trained you in the simple, old, homely, fundamental morality which underlies not only individual character, but is also the strength and support of society.

In the Second Degree she asks you who you are, and adds another lesson, another step, in that process of self-discovery by teaching you that you are an intellectual being, that you have intellectual powers that must be developed and put to the highest uses. Hence her recommendation that you look into the arts and sciences and master the great problems of life, climbing up slowly but surely to wider intellectual outlooks, where there are longer vistas and lifting skies. For this reason, as in the olden time, every lodge is a school for the training of the mind in the moral Geometry of God - training us to think truly, clearly, justly, kindly. For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he, and so is the world to him - luminous and lovely, or dark and dreadful.

Finally, in the Third Degree, Masonry asks that most solemn of all questions, which every man who thinks asks his own heart again and again: "Whither goest thou?" What is the meaning of all this stream of human beings pouring in upon the earth, passing swiftly across it - some sadly, some gladly - and vanishing into the beyond? Whither do they go? What is the destiny of this endless procession? Masonry seeks, in her Third Degree) to make you realize, my brother, that you are an immortal spirit hereto now, upon the earth. It initiates us, symbolically, into the Eternal Life in Time. If we are

immortal at all, we are as immortal now as we ever can be, and to know that fact, and to govern ourselves accordingly, is the supreme human experience. It takes away the fear of death. It makes you a Master of life and time. For surely there is no tyranny like the tyranny of time. Give a man one day in which to live, and how cramped he is. The tick of a watch sounds like a gong. Give him a week and you have liberated him, insofar, and he can breathe more easily. Give him a year, and he can move with more leisure and more amplitude. But let him know that he is divine; that above him there hovers and waits an infinite time; let him know that he is an immortal being and he is free! He can spread his wings and think as far and as fast as his mind can go. He can lay out great plans, and labor for their fulfilling; he can dream great dreams. It adds to the dignity, worth and glory of life. And this is the great insight, prophecy and experience which Masonry would awaken in our hearts – the master truth of the Master's Degree. And so, while teaching us how to live, Masonry would fortify us against the Shadow that waits for every man - teaching us, as Dante said, "how to make our lives eternal."

MASONRY ASKS A YOUNG MAN GREAT QUESTIONS

How beautiful it is that an Ancient Order, coming down to us from the earliest time, should win elect young men to its fellowship, and ask them such great questions. And as they bow at its altar, upon the Bible which their mothers read, it exacts from them high and solemn vows of chastity, of charity, of brotherly love, relief and truth. What is it that makes a man great? It is a great faith and a great idea. Ideas rule the world. Above the battle lines in Europe, if you have eyes to see, you can discover two wars now raging, as long ago Homer saw two battles above the city of Troy - one between the Greeks and Trojans, and one in the viewless air between gods and goddesses. Just so, above the long battle lines you can now see a battle of ideas. Ideas migrate like birds. They hide in crooked lines on a printed page. They force us into the arena to fight for them. Ideas rule the world. Get a right and true idea into the mind of a young man, and you have done more for him than by giving him any treasure of silver or precious stones. When Masonry brings a young man to an altar of prayer, in an atmosphere of reverence, and before the open Book which is the moral manual of civilization, and plants in his mind great, simple, luminous and valid ideas of what it is to be a man, and what life means, it has rendered to him the highest service that any institution can render to a man.

This is what I mean, brethren, by Masonic education, not some dry digging into dusty old documents which have no practical relation to the human life of today. I mean that we should study the story of this Order, its origin and growth, its uses, its great principles and their expression in ritual; but still more the expression of those principles in character and their application to every day life. Truth is for life, and we know as much as we do. I believe that this is worth while for the future of Masonry, for its increased efficiency, and for a deepening of interest in it. Numbers do not count. Size does not signify. It is quality of manhood, quality of thinking and feeling that counts in the long result of time. And Masonry, by bringing men together and teaching them to be friends, without regard to creed, or sect, or party, and training them in the service of great ideals, in loyalty to the great truths, is doing more for the safety and sanctity of this great Republic than both its army and its navy.

"Oh! the cedars of Lebanon glow at our door, And the quarry is sunk at our gate; And the ships out of Ophir, with golden ore, For our summoning mandate wait; And the word of a Master Mason May the house of our soul create!

While the day hath light let the light be used, For no man shall the night control! Or ever
the silver cord be loosed, Or broken the golden bowl, May we build King Solomon's
Temple In the true Masonic Soul!"

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